

The Swabian Dress Project

Part 2 – Pleatwork and The Hemd

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Pleatwork

Pleatwork is a common practice in German and Italian clothing. It is evident in the underclothing of both men and women, as well as aprons, hats and other over clothing. The modern term for this pleating is “smocking,” however this term came into fashion during the Victorian era when it was popular on children’s smocks.

Pleatwork really seems to come into vogue in the mid to late 15th century, based on the portraiture, and continues well into the modern era. Pleating can be left alone, just white on white, embellished with trims, embroidery or beading.



A Nuremburg woman in house dress
by Albrecht Dürer, c. 1500-1501



A Young Girl Of Cologne And Durer's Wife
by Albrecht Dürer, c. 1520



Self Portrait
Albrecht Dürer, 1498

Some things to think about before cutting and pleating:

What fabric will you be using?

Good choices: silk, linen or muslin

Where will the pleatwork be placed?

All the way around, front and sleeves, front only

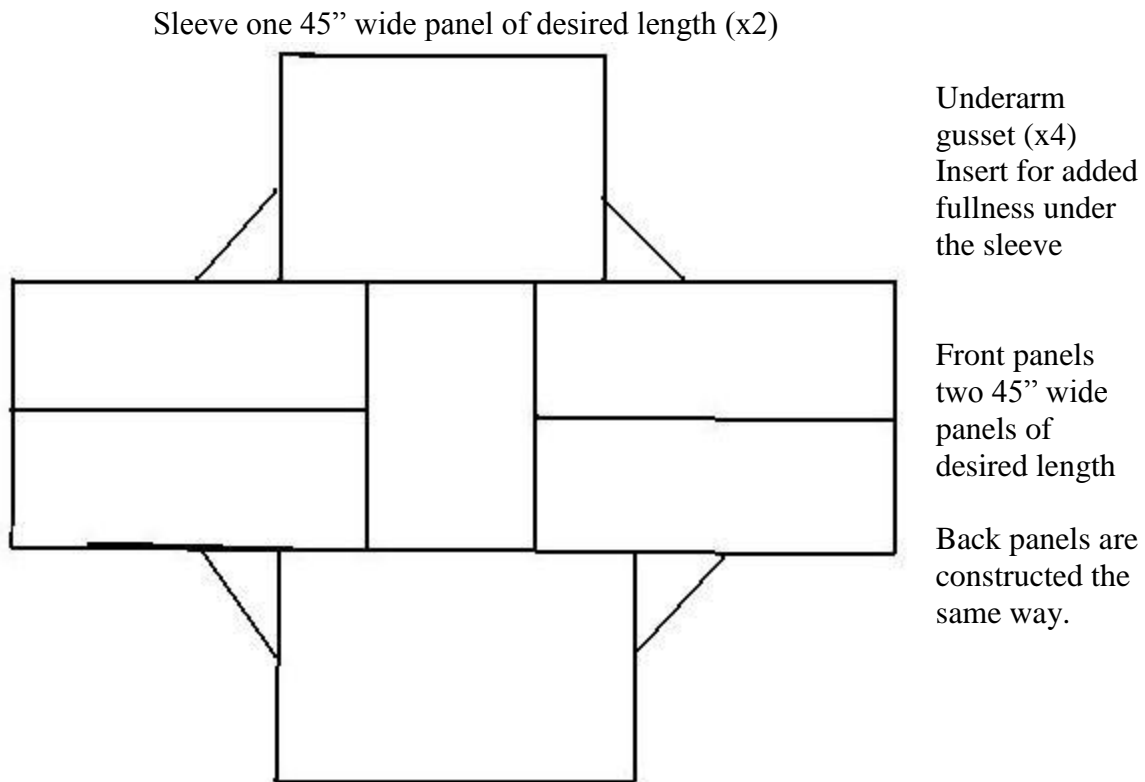
How many threads wide will your pleatwork be?

How will you be embellishing the pleatwork?

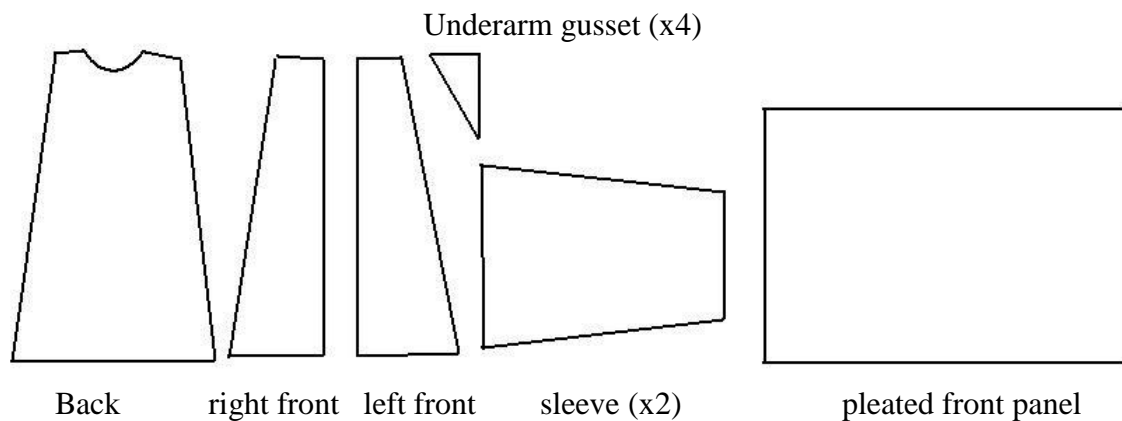
Left straight, white on white, colored threads, beading, trim

Hemd Pattern

Here is the pattern I use for my hemd when it is being pleated all around the neck line:



Here is the pattern I use for my hemd when it is being pleated only in the front:



An additional thing to think about:

Is it going to be easier to construct the garment and then put on the pleatwork or will it be more convenient to finish the pleating first and then set in this finished piece?

Here are my recommendations:

Hemd w/ pleating all around – construct then pleat

Hemd w/ front pleating – pleat then construct

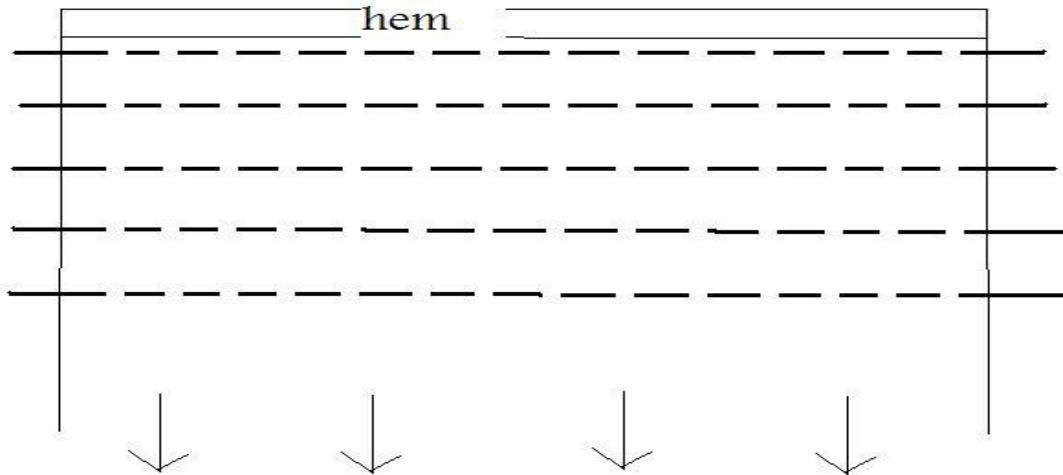
Hemd w/ sleeves and front pleating – construct then pleat

Gollar or Partlett – construct then pleat

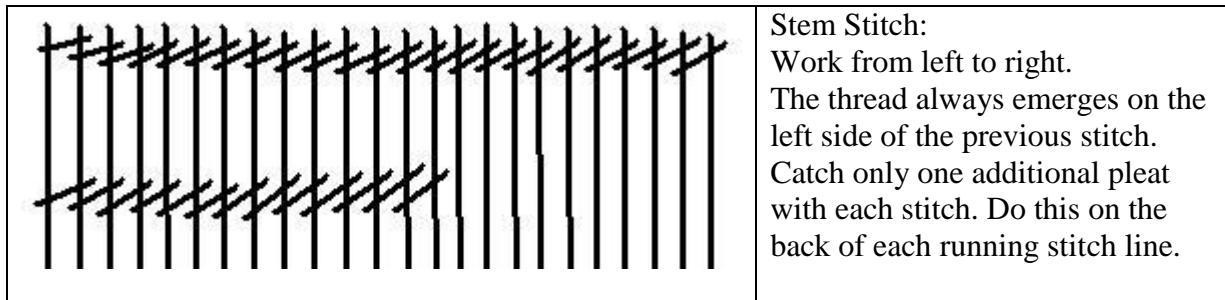
Apron – pleat then construct

Preparing the Pleats

Prepare your fabric for pleatwork by ironing and finishing any seams that will be constructed beforehand. I find it useful to finish off the upper hem of the piece so it doesn't fray as I work. With a running stitch (in and out the windows), sew your desired number of parallel lines. Make sure to keep these equidistant; I like about 1" between each. Also, keep your windows in line so the pleats will run together in vertical lines when gathered.



Once all the stitching lines are finished, gently pull the end threads to gather the pleats together quite tightly. Measure at this point to make sure you have the proper finished width that you desire. Tie these end threads off and cut away the excess. Turn to the back of the pleats and stay stitch using a stem stitch:

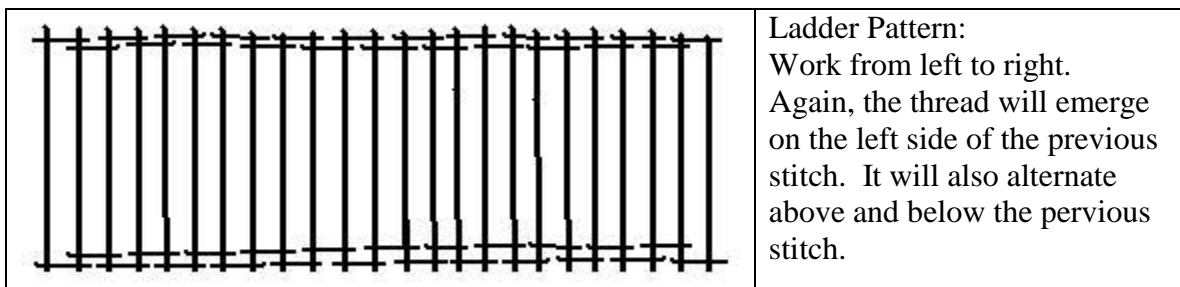


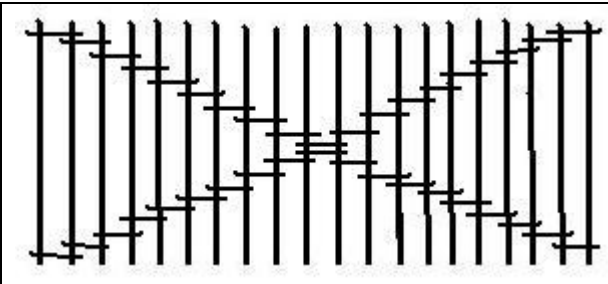
Now for the fancy stuff

Turning to the front, it is now time to begin work on the side everyone will see. It is helpful to lay out your pattern before you begin this stage. You will want to decide the colors you will be using, as well as the design for your stitching.

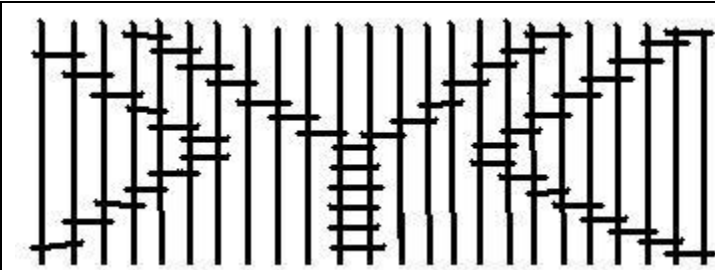
If you will be putting on a trim, do so before beginning embroidery work.

Here are some popular designs that you can use when designing your pattern:





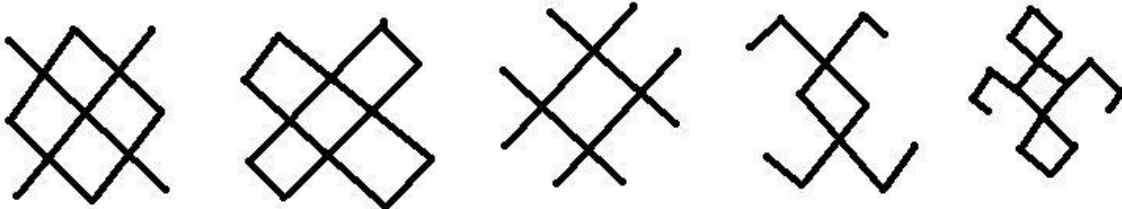
Diamond Pattern:
 Work from left to right.
 The thread will emerge on the left side of the previous stitch. It will be below as long as you want to go down and then switch to above when you want to go up.



Intricate Design:
 Work from left to right.
 This is using a combination of the previous stitches, moving up or down as necessary.

Some popular German Designs:

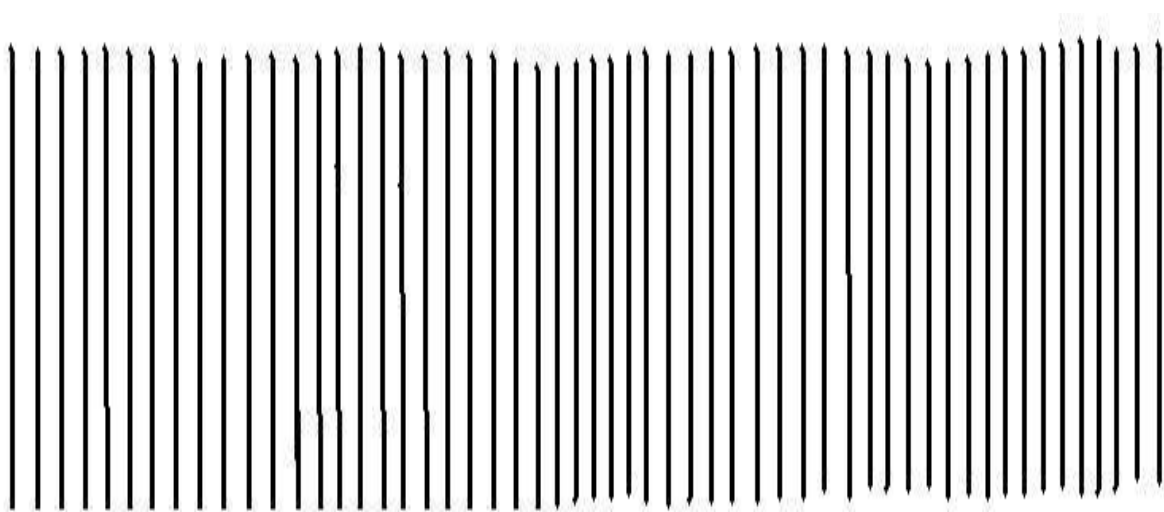
Notice that the patterns are geometric in shape. To stay true to creating the German look, you want your design to be geometric as well. No spirals or curves!



For more patterns from extant examples:

<http://wymarc.com/asoot/asoot.php?show=germanPatterns>

Designing your pattern:



Class Notes:

Pleatwork

German and Italian clothing – talking about German today

Hemd – men and women

Haube

Over clothing – Aprons, work clothes, gollars (partlets)

Smocking – WRONG!

Victorian term

Used on children's smocks

History

Vogue in mid-late 15th c. to modern era

Embellishment

Plain – white on white

Trims

Embroidery

Beading

Pattern and cutting

Hemd with pleatwork all around neck

Gives more fullness to garment – working, moving

Will it show in your finished project?

Explain pattern

Hemd with pleatwork only on front

Less fabric/ bulkiness

Only do work as necessary

Explain pattern

Pleatwork

Explain gathering stitches

Strong thread

1" between stitch lines

Keep windows lined up

Stay stitch back with stem stitch

Add trim

Front embroidery

Lay out design first – pins help to mark

Choose colors

Practice stitches